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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

Action Taken

FROM : AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA — 988 DESP NO. — 790001-1249

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON. — May 8, 1953 DATE — 5-13-53

REF :

Act MAY 9 1953 by CIA

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	REC'D MAY 11	OTHER ARMY NAVY AIR CIA OSD	Direction to DC/R file

SUBJECT: Joint Weeka No. 19 from SAA - Section I.

DECLASSIFICATION DATE 11-30-78
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The confusion and contradictions in the current conduct of Guatemala's foreign affairs were brought to the fore when Foreign Minister Raúl OSEGUEDA told the press "extra-officially" on May 5 that Guatemala was not a member of the OAS and next day issued an official statement saying Guatemala was a member but was not bound by the OAS Charter since its ratification had never been deposited.

President ARBENZ last week publicly put the weight of his prestige behind the Communist leaders of Guatemala's General Confederation of Labor (CGTG) by reviewing the International Labor Day parade and sitting on the speakers platform while the CGTG's Secretary General, Víctor Manuel GUTIERREZ, attacked the United States and praised the Soviet Union. In his own speech the President said that the local anti-Communist movement was a mask for "reactionary" opponents of his Administration and for foreign elements who were attempting to intervene in Guatemala's domestic affairs.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Following an "extra-official" statement to the press on May 5 by Dr. Raúl Osegueda, Guatemalan Foreign Minister, that Guatemala was not a member of the OAS, the Foreign Office issued an official bulletin on May 6 explaining that Guatemala was a member of the OAS but was not bound by the provisions of the OAS Charter because Guatemala's ratification of the Charter had never been deposited. According to the bulletin, when President Arbenz signed the ratification on May 14, 1951 he included, on the recommendation of the Guatemalan Congress, a reservation stating that the Charter's provisions should not be considered as preventing Guatemala from asserting its rights over Belize (British Honduras) "by any means and at any time it deems appropriate". As a result, the Pan American Union, pursuant to a resolution of the VIII International American Conference, did not deposit the ratification pending receipt of the views of other OAS members on Guatemala's reservation; hence, in the Foreign Office's view, the OAS Charter has never come into

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effect so far as Guatemala is concerned. 4790004-1250

Dr. Osegueda's "extra-official" statement was elicited by reporters' inquiries as to his reaction to press reports that El Salvador had requested the OAS to investigate Guatemala's charges that her neighbors were intervening in her domestic politics (Weeka No. 15).

In commenting on the Foreign Office bulletin, the independent newspapers El Imparcial and Prensa Libre expressed relief that Guatemala had not isolated itself completely from the inter-American community by severing its connection with the OAS.

LABOR AND COMMUNISM

The Communist-led celebration of International Labor Day on May 1 took on special significance in Guatemala when President Arbenz indicated his support for the local Communists, at least insofar as their short-term objectives are concerned, by reviewing the parade from the balcony of the National Palace, and afterwards taking a place on the speakers' stand from which the Communist Secretary General of the CGTG, Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez, made a speech denouncing Yankee imperialism, praising the "glorious Soviet Union" and demanding freedom and democracy for the people but not for the "enemies of the people".

President Arbenz concluded the celebration by delivering an address in which he asserted that those accusing the Guatemalan Government of fomenting Communism were simply seeking to "prepare international opinion for intervention in the internal affairs of the country" and also spoke of "the privileged foreigners" who seek support from their governments "so that they may come to their aid and defend by force the injustice of their operations, thus outraging the sovereignty of the country". The public embraces given President Arbenz by the Communists Carlos Manuel PELLECER and Víctor Manuel Gutiérrez as he stepped from the microphone seemed to symbolize the atmosphere prevailing in the celebrations.

The principal themes of the placards and banners in the Labor Day parade were nationalism and loyalty to President Arbenz. The former were expressed in such terms as "No Foreign Intervention", "Imperialist Hands Off of Guatemala" and "Opposition to Foreign Provocation". The themes of peace, bacteriological warfare and atomic weapons, so much emphasized in 1952, were not exploited this year. Only a few banners and placards touched on matters of immediate concern to the workers. The Organization of Central American States (ODECA) was a principal target for attacks, whereas the United States was singled out on only a few occasions and individual foreign companies operating here were neglected almost entirely.

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On the other hand, Sr. Gutiérrez, the first speaker after the parade, showed no hesitancy in attacking the United States. He contrasted the celebration of Labor Day in those countries where workers commemorate their "great conquests" and "strengthen their moral and political unity within the socialist regime" with the observance in other countries where "the people doubly suffer under exploitation and foreign oppression". He sent greetings to the oppressed everywhere, including the Rosenbergs and "all Central American laborers exploited and savagely oppressed by the imperialist Yankee companies and by the landlord-bourgeois-revolutionary clique". He sent greetings particularly to the workers of the "great Soviet Union" and the other Communist countries. He pledged the workers' loyalty to President Arbenz and spoke of the attacks on the Government as financed by "foreign reactionary states and Yankee imperialist companies such as the United Fruit". There must be, he said, extensive freedom and democracy for the people but it would be dangerous and wrong to believe that freedom should be given to the enemy, who should "be crushed once and for all".

President Arbenz in his address stated that the accusation that his Government fomented Communism was false and served as a screen for those who were attempting to intervene "openly and insolently" in the internal life of Guatemala. He said that the difficulties in Guatemala resolved themselves into "a struggle between the party of the great majority of the people and the party of the great landholders and privileged foreigners" and added that the latter party would be of no particular importance were it not that such foreigners "always seek the support of their respective governments". Alluding to the proposal of El Salvador to discuss in the ODECA joint means of combatting Communism, Colonel Arbenz pointed out that the efforts to improve relations among the Central American Governments had been thwarted by the advancement of a proposal which "happened to coincide with the lying international propaganda and with the intentions of those who financially support this propaganda and ask for intervention", but he reiterated the friendship of his Government towards the Governments of the other Central American Republics. He ended his address by speaking of "the people's determination to fight for the maintenance of our democratic regime and to defend tenaciously and energetically, inch by inch, the national sovereignty and independence of the country".

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PSYCHOLOGICAL

The Communist leaders of organized labor in Guatemala skillfully utilized the willingness of President Arbenz to be associated publicly with them in the May Day celebrations to enhance their prestige with the people. His liking in his address of "privileged foreigners" with "great landholders" as the enemies of his "democratic" regime also reinforced the Communists' attacks on United States interests here.

In Guatemala where 70% of the people are illiterate, the physical presence of the President on the platform with the heads of the CGTG had the effect of surrounding them with the aura of his prestige and placing behind them the weight of his authority. The various dictators who with brief exceptions ruled Guatemala from 1839 to 1944 instilled in the simple Indian laborer an enormous respect, based on fear, for the Chief of the Government; his orders had to be carried out to the letter on pain of severe reprisals. Hence the association of the President with the Communist leaders before a large crowd of spectators was a valuable asset to them. That they were aware of the psychological value of this was also indicated by the publication on the front page of the Communist weekly Octubre for April 16 of a photograph showing the Communist labor leader Victor Manuel Gutierrez shaking hands with President Arbenz at last year's Labor Day celebration.

Rudolf E. Schoenfeld

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